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Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T STATE 101011

NODIS
EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR AND MINISTER

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: GE, GW

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE PRISONER EXCHANGE INVOLVING ALAN VAN NORMAN

REF: STATE 95226 NOTAL

1. GDR LAWYER VOGEL HAS PROPOSED THAT ROBERT THOMPSON, AN AMERICAN CONVICTED IN 1965 OF SPYING FOR THE GDR, BE EXCHANGED FOR ALAN VAN NORMAN, AN AMERICAN STUDENT IMPRISONED IN THE GDR ON EXFILTRATION
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CHARGES, AND MIRON MARCUS, AN ISRAELI PILOT SHOT DOWN LAST YEAR OVER MOZAMBIQUE. VOGEL SAID THAT SUCH A DEAL WOULD HAVE A "GOOD EFFECT" ON A LATER DECISION CONCERNING SHCHARANSKY. HE ALSO REPORTED CUBAN INTEREST IN A SEPARATE EXCHANGE OF AN AMERICAN IN A CUBAN JAIL NAMED LUNT DOR RR;OLEBNON, A PUERTO RICAN NATIONALIST IMPRISONED FOR SHOOTING

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UP THE HOUSE GALLERY IN THE 1950'S.

2. SINCE THOMPSON MAY BE ABOUT TO BE PAROLED ANYWAY WE HAVE MOVED AHEAD ON THE EXCHANGE SUGGESTED BY VOGEL. A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICER MET WITH GILMAN, LUNT'S LAWYER, AND SHABTAI KALMANOWITCH (AN ISRAELI GO-BETWEEN FOR VOGEL), IN WASHINGTON ON APRIL 13, LISTENED TO VOGEL'S PROPOSAL, BUT EXPRESSED NO OPINION ON THE PROPOSAL EXCEPT TO SAY THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. FOR HIS PART, GILMAN GAVE KALMANOWITCH A LETTER TO VOGEL EXPRESSING OPTIMISM ABOUT THE PROSPECTS AND AGREEING TO MEET VOGEL IN WASHINGTON APRIL 26. KALMANOWITCH AGREED TO TOUCH BASE WITH DCM IN BONN APRIL 15 BEFORE MEETING WITH VOGEL IN HAMBURG LATER THAT SAME DAY.

3. IN BONN APRIL 15, DCM, ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS, GAVE KALMANOWITCH A LETTER STATING THAT USG IS PREPARED TO RELEASE THOMPSON, IF A) THOMPSON AGREES; B) VAN NORMAN IS SIMULTANEOUSLY RELEASED; AND C) MARCUS IS RELEASED. HE ALSO TOLD KALMANOWITCH THAT DEPARTMENT IS PREPARED TO TALK TO CUBANS ABOUT A LUNT-LEBRON EXCHANGE AND IS INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO WHAT VOGEL HAS TO SAY ABOUT SHCHARANSKY. DCM HAS ALSO ARRANGED TO TALK WITH VOGEL ABOUT CASE OF
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NICHOLAS SHADRIN, AMCIT FORMER SOVIET DEFECTOR WHO DISAPPEARED IN VIENNA IN 1976.

4. ON APRIL 16, VOGEL CALLED DCM TO REPORT THAT MARCUS WOULD BE RELEASED ON MOZAMBIQUE-SWAZILAND BORDER AND TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF THOMPSON-VAN NORMAN EXCHANGE.

5. AS THINGS NOW STAND, MARCUS WILL BE RELEASED APRIL 23 AT MOZAMBIQUE-SWAZILAND BORDER; DEPARTMENT OFFICER WILL CONTACT CUBANS ABOUT LUNT-LEBRON EXCHANGE; VOGEL AND KALMANOWITCH WILL MEET IN WASHINGTON APRIL 26 WITH GILMAN AND DEPARTMENT OFFICERS TO DISCUSS MECHANICS OF THOMPSON-VAN NORMAN EXCHANGE AND POSSIBLY SHADRIN AND SHCHARANSKY CASES.

6. IN APRIL 16 CALL TO DCM IN BONN, VOGEL OFFERED THREE ALTERNATIVES FOR SIMULTANEOUS THOMPSON-VAN NORMAN EXCHANGE. IT COULD BE DONE, HE SAID, AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE, BUT HE DID NOT FAVOR THIS BECAUSE IT MIGHT BE HARD TO AVOID PUBLIC NOTICE. ANOTHER WAY WOULD BE TO TAKE THOMPSON BY S-BAHN FROM WEST TO

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EAST BERLIN (FRIEDRICHSTRASSE STATION). VOGEL WOULD HAVE VAN NORMAN WAITING ON THE PLATFORM AT FRIEDRICHSTRASSE AND HE COULD BE BROUGHT BACK TO WEST BERLIN. STILL ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, AFTER BRINGING THOMPSON TO WEST BERLIN, WOULD BE FOR VOGEL TO TELEPHONE HIS WIFE FROM WEST BERLIN AND SHE COULD COLLECT VAN NORMAN AND BRING HIM OVER BY CAR. VOGEL WOULD THEN TAKE THOMPSON TO EAST BERLIN. DCM SAID HE WOULD REPORT THESE POSSIBILITIES.

7. NEWSWEEK HAS THE DETAILS OF THE STORY AND WAS ONLY PERSUADED BY CONGRESSMAN GILMAN TO DELAY PUBLICATION AFTER GETTING HIS AGREEMENT TO HAVING A NEWSWEEK TEAM PRESENT (WITH GILMAN) AT THE MARCUS

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TURNOVER APRIL 23. WE WILL SEEK TO MINIMIZE PUBLICITY AND ARE PRESENTLY OFFERING NO COMMENT.

8. EMBASSY BERLIN SHOULD PROCEED WITH CLEMENCY APPEAL PROCEDURE (REFTEL) AND SHOULD NOT VOLUNTEER ANY KNOWLEDGE OF ABOVE DEVELOPMENTS TO VOGEL OR GDR AUTHORITIES. SHOULD VOGEL RAISE MATTER, EMBASSY MAY EXPRESS GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF DEVELOPMENTS, SHOULD AVOID DISCUSSION OF DETAILS AND SHOULD NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ALLUDE TO SENSITIVE AND CLOSELY HELD VOGEL CHANNEL TO DCM BONN. VOGEL, WE UNDERSTAND, MAY SOON APPLY FOR VISA AT EMBASSY.

9. WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS VAN NORMAN'S RELEASE IN ABOVE MANNER IN NO WAY IMPLIES THAT HE WAS U.S. AGENT AND, AS DEVELOPMENTS UNFOLD, WE WILL WANT TO AVOID

ANY STATEMENT OR ACTION THAT WOULD CREATE SUCH A FALSE IMPRESSION.

10. DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECITE COMMENTS ON ALTERNATIVES OFFERED BY VOGEL FOR THOMPSON-VAN NORMAN EXCHANGE. CHRISTOPHER

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